

“ A career is the sum total of all the work--paid or unpaid--you have done and will do in a lifetime.”

Anonymous

## Career Planning... Where do I begin?

There are many sources of information just waiting for you. Whether you are looking for information on career planning, counseling, training, education, or financial aid, there are resources available. Here is a list to get you started.

**Personal Contacts.** The people closest to you--family and friends--can be extremely helpful in providing career information. While in high school you make friends with many people whether as a member of a sports team or the honor society or a particular class. Talk to them, your family and friends, they can provide a wealth of information. Networking is what most call this. These people may be able to answer your questions directly or they may be able to put you in touch with someone else who can. Networking can be an effective way to learn the type of training necessary for a certain position. You could also find out how someone in a particular position entered the field, what the prospects for advancement are, and what the person likes or dislikes about the work.

**Public Libraries, career centers, and guidance offices.** These institutions maintain a great deal of up-to-date material. To begin your library search, look at the computer listings under “vocations” or “careers” and then under more specific fields. Check the periodicals section, where trade and professional magazines and journals about specific occupations and industries are located. Check your school’s career centers for resources such as:

- individual counseling and testing;
- guest speakers, field trips, books;
- career magazines; and
- career days.

**Counselors.** These professionals are trained to help you discover your strengths and weaknesses, evaluate your goals and values, and help you determine what you would like in a career. Counselors will not tell you what to do. They may, however, administer interest inventories and aptitude tests, interpret the results, and help you explore various options. Counselors also may discuss local job markets and the entry requirements and costs of schools, colleges, or training programs.

**Internet.** Most companies, professional societies, academic institutions, and government agencies now maintain a web site. Occupational and industry data, career counseling, and financial aid information are just a small sampling of what’s available. “The world awaits you” when you log on to the world wide web.

**Professional societies, trade associations, labor unions, business firms, and educational institutions.** These organizations provide a variety of free or inexpensive career material. Many of these are listed in an additional information section in the *Occupational Outlook Handbook 2000-2001 (OOH)*, developed by the U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. The complete OOH is available on-line at <http://www.bls.gov/ocohome.htm>.

*Occupational Outlook Handbook 2000-2001, Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Dept. of Labor*

## What do You See?

**A Duck?  
A Rabbit?  
Mutant Hybrid?  
Cute Pet?  
Whacked Out Design?  
Juicy Dinner?**



Even though we’re all looking at the same picture, our interpretations of what we see can be very different. Similarly, our interests, values and abilities all influence the way we interpret our experiences. That’s what makes you, you--and me, me.

Understanding yourself is the first step in finding satisfying work. As with the accompanying picture, when you look inside yourself, who you see may not be clear to you. But taking the time to determine who you are will provide you with a solid base for your job hunt. (See page 28 for more on this.)

It is important to be honest with yourself, which means acknowledging those things that you don’t like about yourself as well as those things you do like. After all, you will probably spend half of your life working. So doesn’t it make sense to have the most accurate self-concept possible?

Your likes, dislikes, interests, and preferences for certain types of activities can clue you in as to what kind of career you might want. Other clues can be found through thinking about past jobs, school activities, volunteer work and hobbies.

What is important to you will have a great impact on your career. Usually, for a job to be satisfying, it needs to be connected to the values

and beliefs of the person performing it. Work values might include such things as having job security, friendly co-workers, a steady income, and the chance to travel, meet new people, learn new skills and perform varied activities. Personal values might involve having time for family, friends, vacations, community work, and hobbies.

Examining your lifestyle will increase your self-awareness and enable you to better match your personality with the career options open to you at various points in your life. Think about the things you enjoy doing, the people you hang out with, how you dress, what you do in your spare time. The knowledge of what work you most want to do, what you are best suited to do, and, most of all, what makes you unique, is the most important knowledge you can have.

Think about all the stuff you have crunched in your head now--sports stats, TV trivia, song lyrics, tiny details on the life stories of your heroes. Does it make sense to know more about the life of a basketball player, sitcom star, or rock idol than about what you want to do with your own life?

Source: New York State Dept. of Labor, Division of Research and Statistics in cooperation with the New York State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee <<http://www.wdsny.org/visions/interpretations.htm>>



## Steps to a Successful Career Plan

Although success is not a guarantee, it is useful to have a plan of action to help achieve your career goals.

### Define Your Goal

What do you wish to accomplish? State this goal in general terms. Review the process below so that you know how each step relates to the others.

### Gather Information

First, know yourself; your strengths, weaknesses, interests, skills, and other characteristics. Second, learn about occupations that appeal to you; learn what workers in this occupation do, the skills, knowledge, education, and experience required, and the job outlook. Third, determine what education or training you need for the occupations that interest you.

### List and Evaluate Options

From your list of occupations, choose those that best fit your characteristics. For each, list the advantages and disadvantages. How do you feel about each option on the list?

### Select an Option AND an Alternative Option

After you select a first-choice occupation, also select a second choice option that you can fall back on if necessary.

### Carry Out Your Plan

If you do not already have it, get the education or training you will need. When appropriate, get experience that will prepare you. You can do this by getting a summer job or an internship

position. When you are ready to job hunt, prepare a quality resume and cover letter and prepare for interviews by practicing along or with a friend or family member. (See center section for more on resumes and cover letters.)

### Be Ready to Continue Planning!

Few jobs these days are permanent enough to last through your entire working career. Stay flexible and be ready to move up (or at least move on) when the time comes. Continue developing your skills, work hard to be successful in your job. Again, always aim to be the best you can!

Source: Mid-Atlantic Guide to Information on Careers